THE HISTORY OF ROCK

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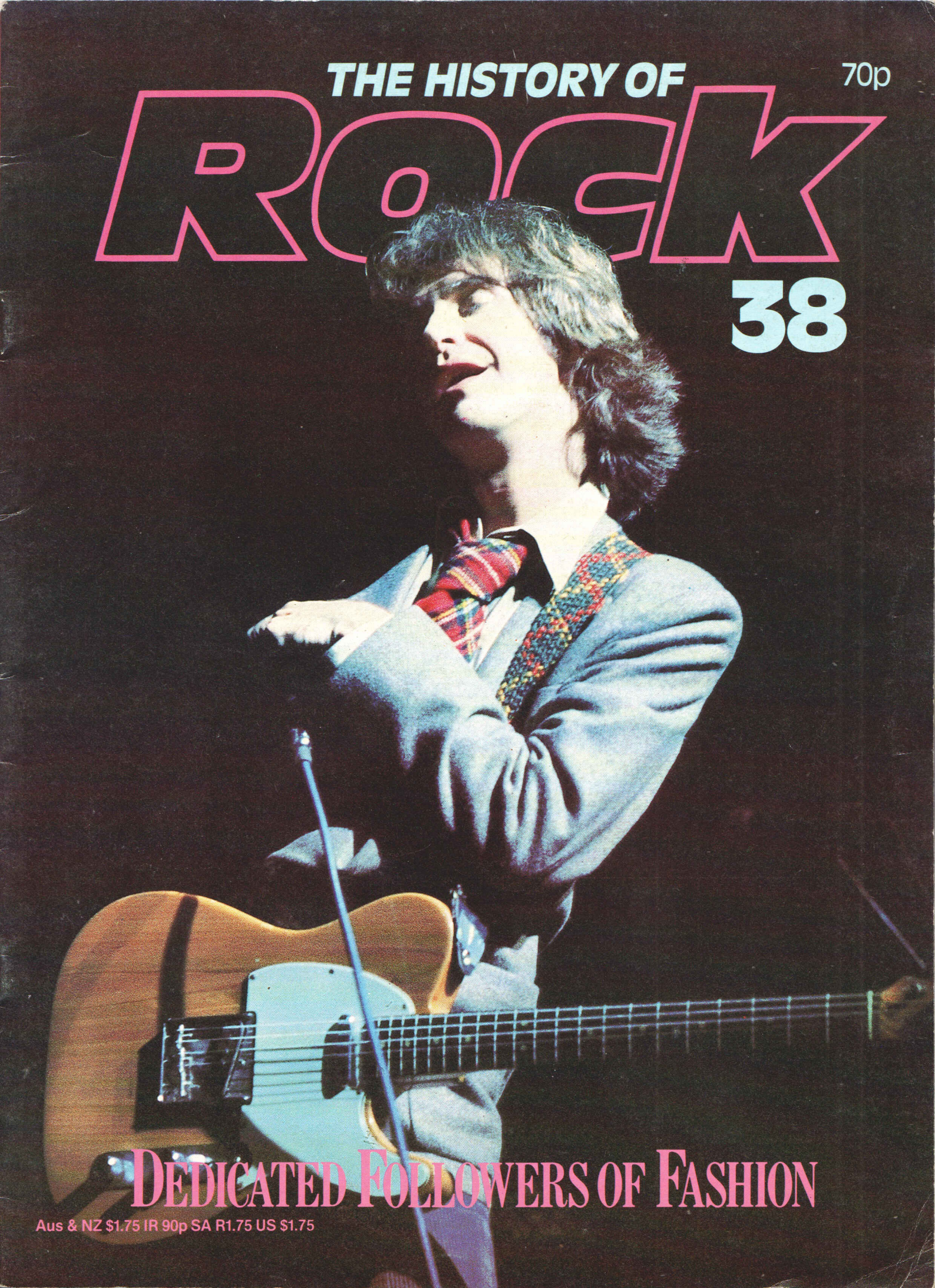

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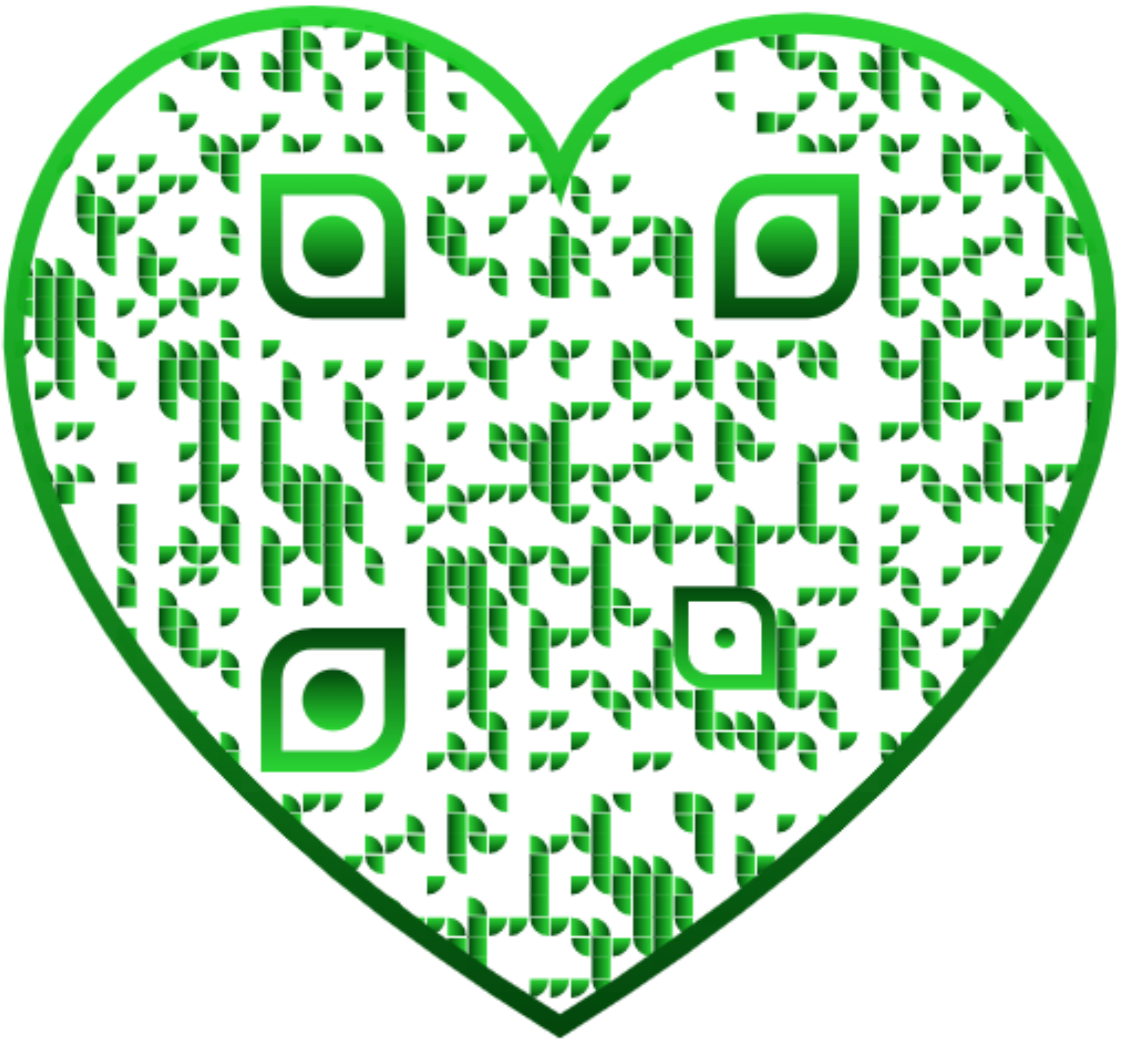

THE HISTORY OF ROCK

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Swinging London

When golden sounds came from the streets of the capital

LOOKING BACK NOW at the early Sixties, it's hard to pinpoint exactly why things changed so rapidly. Endless books and articles have been written – facts emerge, trends are examined, people reminisce. Yet although objectivity increases with the passage of time, the reality becomes harder to recall. We reconstruct the past in categories, most of which were probably unrecognised at the time – and by creating these categories we may overlook something essential about the period under discussion.

In 1965, a shift took place across a whole range of British teenage sensibilities. The musical explosion of 1963-64 had opened things up, had made Britain's youth aware of its own potential and had killed the idea that provincial culture was 'irrelevant'. And although London had reasserted its dominance by mid 1965, it now presided over a new teenage world. New clothes, new radio and TV programmes and new groups played an important role in a world in which music was part of a general style, a world in which nuances of clothing could be as important as the nuances in a singer's voice.

In the pop culture of the mid Sixties, the subtleties of personal style, clothes and makeup were as important as the music itself. Model Jean Shrimpton (above) became the face of the era, and Carnaby Street (left) became the fashion centre of the nation's youth.

Provincial power

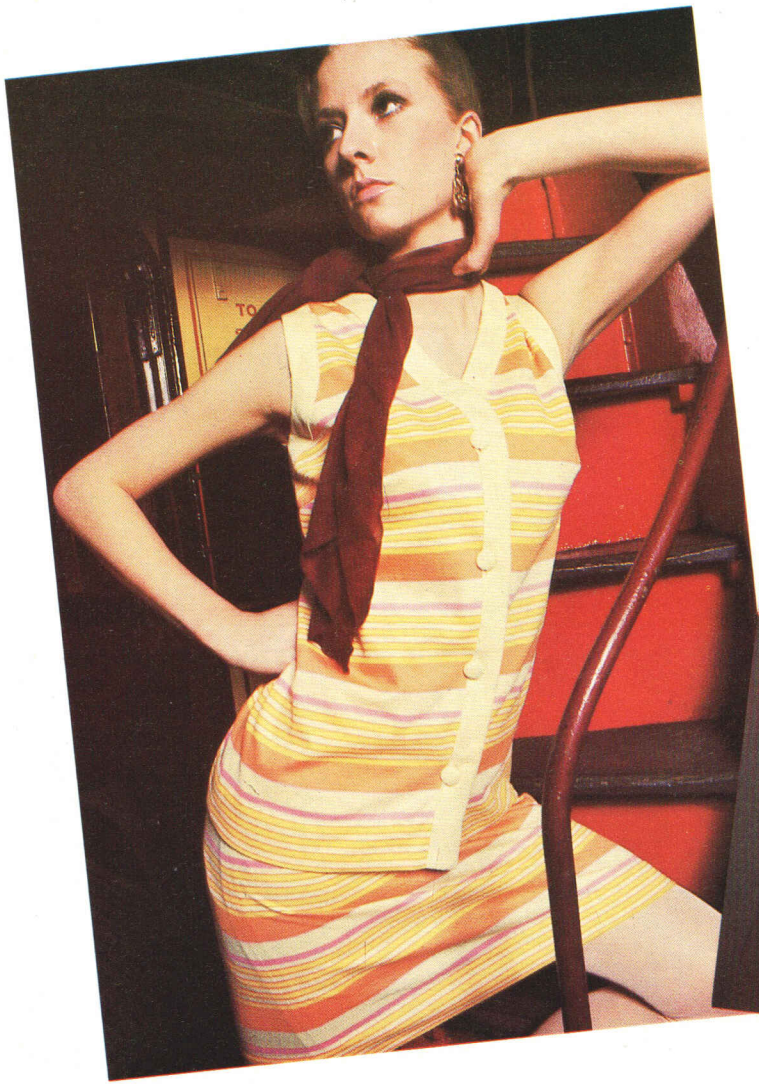
Prior to the Beatles, provincial towns had been separate entities. Communication, although expanding, was designed to link the provinces with London rather than to improve London-

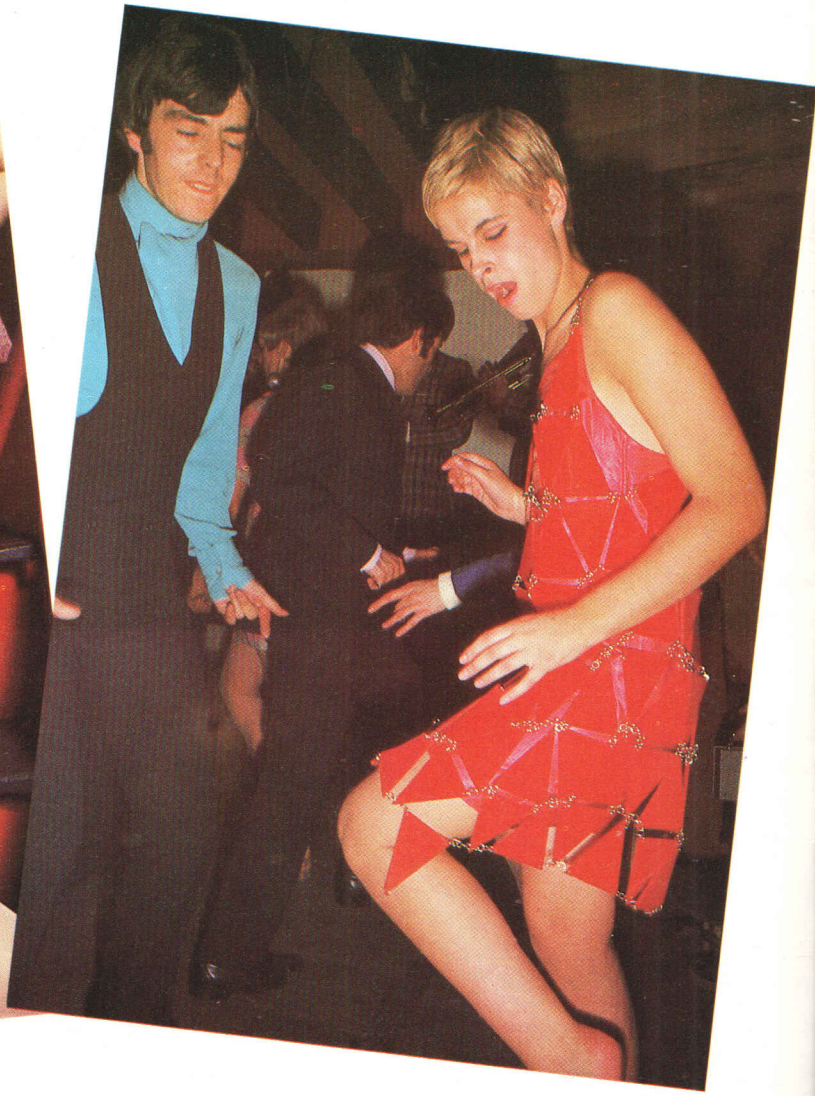
ers' knowledge of Liverpool or Manchester. All roads led to London. But all that was to change within weeks of the Beatles' success, as the media 'discovered' Liverpool. The music scene was the most important, of course; the legends of A&R men falling over each other at Lime Street Station in order to get at the group first are largely true. More significantly, the national (London-based) papers and television wanted to know anything and everything about the place.

Liverpool wasn't the only focus of attention after the revelation that there was life outside London. The Hollies and Freddie and the Dreamers were the 'Manchester Sound', the Animals were the 'Newcastle Sound', the Rockin' Berries the 'Birmingham Sound'. But this fascination with things northern lasted less than two years before interest moved back to London.

London had not been dead during Beatlemania; the media had simply been looking elsewhere. In reality there had been a thriving and growing scene that had developed from the late Fifties onwards. This had largely been split two ways. On the one hand there had been the whole art school phenomenon which had given birth to the coffee-bar and jazz-club scene. The people involved were largely middle-class rather than affluent, but their educational backgrounds and creative bent had given them an interest in the more esoteric areas of the arts, particularly in music and literature (their heroes were jazz and blues musicians and the American Beat poets), and a desire to create their own fashions. Their lives centred on the new Soho scene, at coffee bars like the House of Sam Widges and Heaven and Hell, and clubs like Studio 51 and the Marquee.

Out of this grew the early Sixties R&B fraternity; and, although it was initially an





Fashions were crisp, bright and aggressively modern (above), and came into their own in the frenetic, after-hours world of London's blossoming night spots like the Cromwellian Club (above right).

underground phenomenon, it had gone overground by early 1964 in the form of the Rolling Stones. It was around the success of the Stones that the superiority of the Liverpool provincial scene started to be challenged. On its own the art school 'style' would never have succeeded, but it did so when it started to merge with the other London scene – that of the Mods.

Mods and mini-skirts

Mods go back to the late Fifties and very early Sixties, when devoted (male) fashion-freaks would go to places like Bilgorri's in Bishopsgate to get their clothes made to measure. Around the same time a few tailors in an obscure street in Soho were offering a similar service; this was the birth of the Carnaby Street phenomenon.

The earliest shops had catered for a gay clientele who, along with West Indians, were the only males habitually to wear brightly-coloured shirts. By 1962, however, the shops had a whole new breed of customer. The influences were originally Italian, and later American Ivy League, very cool and sharp, but with sufficient variety to change almost every week. It was the first time that there had been real fashion for men.

The original Mods had been into modern jazz (as distinct from the art school trad-jazz leanings) and, whereas the art school types had moved on to Chicago-style R&B, the new Mods graduated to soul and bluebeat. Although there were always distinct differences between the two groups, by the time the Stones started to break early in 1964 both camps became lumped together as the new London scene. With the lure of the capital going against it, the Liverpool scene, as such, stood no chance. By the end of 1964 no one was really interested in Scouse accents any more – almost overnight Carnaby Street had become the fashion centre of the world (the teenage one anyway) and was rapidly becoming one of the great tourist sights of the city.

Everywhere it was apparent that 'pop culture' had arrived. Carnaby Street, no longer a male preserve, was providing Mod fashion for girls – the age of the mini-skirt was imminent. Pretty soon it wasn't just Carnaby Street – the word 'boutique' was entering the language. Bursting out of Soho, boutiques spread into the suburban high streets and, by mid 1965, every town in England had at least one.

The music scene had boomed in London as well. Almost all the major new bands were coming up through the London clubs: the Who, the Kinks, the Pretty Things, the Yardbirds – the list was impressive. And the provincial groups themselves became part of the capital's music scene; the Beatles had been permanent residents from mid 1964 onwards, for example. This was due partly to the fact that their business was centred in London, but probably more significant was their view of the capital as more fun – more sophisticated, more cosmopolitan.

This was the time when the Smart Set

discovered pop music. In 1965, London gave birth to a number of clubs, like the Ad-Lib and the Bag O'Nails, where the sons and daughters of the aristocracy could rub shoulders with the new working-class aristocrats – pop stars. In fact, Swinging London was the era during which class barriers were supposedly swept away and anyone could become, say, a photographer. This whole aspect of Swinging London is the one usually captured in the films of the period, which (apart from attempting to propagate the myth) were usually two years too late in coming out.

For the successful musicians themselves, the Ad-Lib was far more attractive than Liverpool's Cavern or Newcastle's Downbeat. Only family entertainers, artists like Cilla Black or Ken Dodd, emphasised provincial connections, and this as part of light-hearted wholesomeness rather than any idea of musical progress.

The media move in

As the chic and interesting people moved into London, and became part of a general lifestyle, so the media reflected the change. The national press, ever on the watch for newsworthy trends, was quick to latch on to the concept of Swinging London, but changes in broadcasting were also important in building the new image.

The birth of pirate radio was of great importance. The money and machinations behind the ship-borne transmitters might be extremely dubious, and the government certainly disapproved, but there is no doubt that the pirates both answered a need in the nation's youth and added a significant new facet to teenage culture. On the television, too, there were changes. ITV's 'Ready, Steady, Go!' became enormously influential.

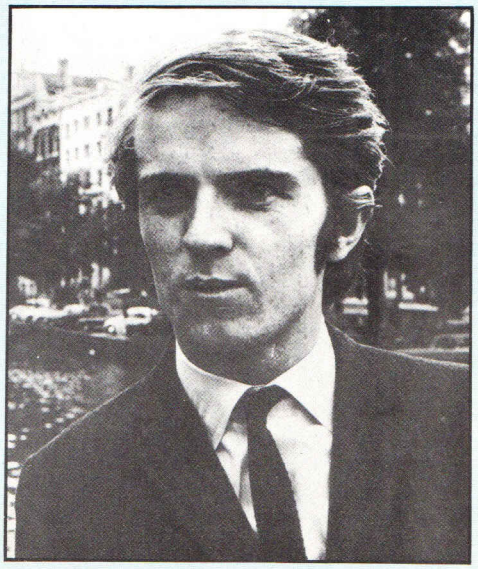
Without doubt 'RSG' was the single most effective promoter of London style of the time – and it was also a great programme. Although essentially Mod in terms of style and audience, it presented artists and bands from all corners of the new music – as long as they were exciting and innovative – both English and from the States. On any week you were likely to see anybody from the Byrds to the Who or Inez and Charlie Foxx. At the end of each show the nation's youth would know what it was supposed to wear the following week, and in this respect 'RSG' was like a revamped 'American Bandstand'.

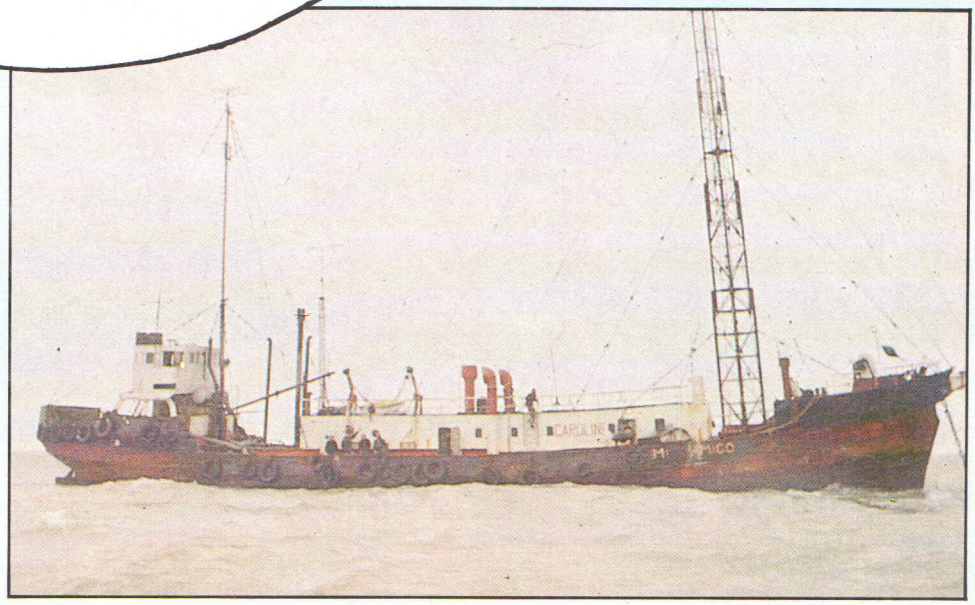
By 1967 things had changed, and the media were getting tired of Carnaby Street stories. Those involved at the centre were either growing out of the old scene or had started looking for other things – nothing in the pop world lasts forever, its very immediacy dictates that. The new ideas were coming from the States, particularly the San Francisco acid scene. And 1967 was the year that the press picked up on it both in Britain and in the US, and the next phase of pop culture had begun. But from 1964 until 1966, London was where it was at.

JOHN PLATT

Lifted from obscurity to host ITV's immensely influential pop show 'Ready, Steady, Go!', Cathy McGowan (above) was the perfect reflection of Swinging London. 'RSG' sold the look, the style, the records; the public bought them avidly (inset).

PIRACY IN THE AIR





How important was pirate radio in Britain?

A REVOLUTION in British broadcasting occurred during the mid Sixties, the effects of which are still being felt two decades later. Its instigators were an unlikely collection of hardened American money men, young entrepreneurs, independent ship-owners and inexperienced disc jockeys, who together launched the concept of 'pirate' radio on the UK listening public. Pirate radio was so-called because it involved the transmission of programmes from ships moored outside British territorial waters, exploiting a loophole in international telecommunications law. With pop-based programming and financial dependence on advertising, the new pirate stations broke new broadcasting ground in terms of style, content and operation. Their long-term impact on the British pop scene, too, proved to be no less emphatic.

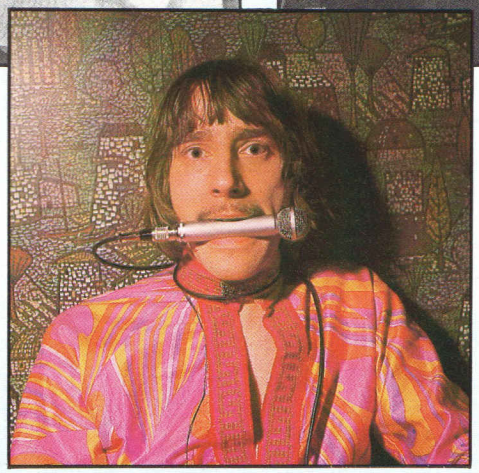
The idea began in Europe, where pirate radio ships had been broadcasting off the coasts of Holland, Denmark and Sweden since 1960, but it took a 23-year-old Irishman named Ronan O'Rahilly to see its true potential. As the agent of singer Georgie Fame, he knew at first hand of the difficulties in securing airplay for artists who did not have the backing of a big record label. The BBC was restricted in the amount of records it could play by agreements with the Musicians' Union and other organisations, and was naturally conservative in its choice of music, while Radio Luxembourg's pop output was largely determined by Britain's four major record companies, who leased air time from the station to promote their own products.

O'Rahilly realised that a pirate station could create a new demand for land-based commercial radio and thereby break the BBC-Luxembourg stranglehold on broadcast pop music. Using £250,000 culled from various family and business sources, he bought and refurbished a former Danish passenger ferry called the *Frederika* and installed on board two 10-kilowatt transmitters and a 168-foot-high radio mast. On Easter Sunday, 29 March 1964, Radio Caroline was officially launched with a record show presented by Simon Dee, one of several pirate disc jockeys who would quickly become 'stars' in their own right.

Caroline's launch attracted much publicity, and political hand-wringing on the part of the Government and the Post Office, while the sheer novelty of day-long pop radio ensured a listening audience of several million within weeks. Anchored some four miles off Harwich, the station was soon joined by another pirate ship, Radio Atlanta, which dropped anchor off Frinton-on-Sea in Essex. In July, the two stations merged and the *Frederika* sailed for the Isle of Man to take up a new identity as Radio Caroline North, while the former Radio Atlanta became Radio Caroline South.

Attempts to silence the stations began immediately: Phonographic Performances Ltd. claimed that the two pirates were infringing copyright every time they played a record and unsuccessfully sought a court injunction, while the Conservative Government threatened to take legislative action to outlaw them – action that was postponed because of the possible damage it might cause to the party's chances in the impending general election. The two Carolines, after all, were maintaining their popularity, and Government indecision simply encouraged the setting up of two more stations.

In late May, Radio Sutch began broadcasting, not from a ship this time but from an abandoned Second World War gun tower in the Thames estuary. The brainchild of an eccentric pop personality named Screaming Lord Sutch, the station broadcast over a small area and was in perpetual financial difficulties until Sutch sold his interest in the station to his manager Reg Calvert, who re-christened it Radio City. In June, Radio Invicta was launched from another fort and lasted until January 1965, when it became King Radio. Then, in December 1964, the ever-growing list of pirate stations was ex-



Ronan O'Rahilly (opposite above), who masterminded pirate radio, and his original Radio Caroline ship (opposite). Many pirate disc jockeys became stars in their own right. They included Simon Dee (top left), Tony Blackburn (top right) and Stuart Henry (above).

tended to include probably the most professionally-run and most popular pirate of all, Radio London.

Top Forty format

As the new Labour Government (elected in October 1964) inherited its predecessor's reluctance to act on the pirates – again for electoral reasons – so yet more stations appeared. Radio 390 took over from King Radio in September 1965; Radio Essex began transmitting in the same month; Radio Scotland was launched in January 1966, and Radio England and Britain Radio were in operation a few months later. Only Radio 390 deviated from the rigid formula of latest pop hits, disc-jockey patter and commercials that Caroline had established very early on. It classed itself as a 'sweet music station' and played mainly orchestral and light music, but its programmes also included such novelties as 'Eve, the Women's Magazine of the Air', a daily serial and the radio equivalent of a personal column.

The pirates unashamedly modelled themselves on US pop stations, with their emphasis on non-stop music – most kept to a strict Top 40 playlist – and commercials. They even adopted call-signs and jingles, most of which were produced by the Fun Factory organisation in Austin, Texas. Precisely which discs the stations played often depended on financial arrangements with record companies: Radio Caroline was particularly notorious for this, charging £8 per play and promoting heavily those discs that had Caroline-owned songs (published by a sister company) as flipsides.

Few stations paid any attention to the sales charts, and Radio London was unusual in leaving the playlist selection to the disc jockeys themselves: such an outlook gave unprecedented exposure to dozens of new acts, boosted the chances of the smaller record companies and undermined the power of Britain's major labels. And although the record industry officially condemned the pirates, they continued to bombard the stations with free records and promotional material, well aware of their ability to make or break a record. The Honeycombs' 'Have I The Right', Neil Christian's 'That's Nice', P. P. Arnold's 'First Cut Is The Deepest', Unit Four Plus Two's 'Concrete And Clay', Keith West's 'Excerpt From A Teenage Opera', Chris Farlowe's 'Out Of Time' and Procol Harum's 'A Whiter Shade Of Pale' were a few of the discs that probably would not have become hits without the pirates' help.

The disc jockeys themselves were nearly all newcomers to radio, though a few had broadcasting experience in Canada and the United States. Simon Dee and Tony Blackburn answered Caroline's pre-launch recruitment advertisement in *New Musical Express*, while others were chosen from the barrage of tapes sent in to the stations by enthusiastic amateurs once the pirate bandwagon started rolling.

Their slick, Americanised yet quaintly unprofessional style of presentation offered a welcome contrast to that of their BBC and Luxembourg counterparts; some, like Caroline's Tony Blackburn and Emperor Rosko, Radio Scotland's Stuart Henry and London's Kenny Everett, even achieved star status on a par with the artists whose discs they played. Simon Dee became the first pirate DJ to join the BBC in 1965, eventually hosting his own television chat show, while other familiar radio names to emerge during the pirate era included John Peel, Dave Cash, Ed Stewart, Pete Drummond, Tom Edwards, Tommy Vance, Dave Lee Travis, Tony Brandon and Johnnie Walker.

Commercial break

The stations depended on advertising for survival and Caroline and London, in particular, could afford to charge high rates. Findus, Shell, Weetabix, VP Wines, the *News of the World*, Alberto Shampoos the National Coal Board and the Egg Marketing Board (both Government bodies) all used the pirates, booking their commercials through leading London-based advertising agencies.

Caroline charged £90 for 30 seconds of air time, London £56 and Radio Essex (the smallest of all the pirates) a modest £8 10s (£8.50) for the same amount. With many of the stations thus making substantial profits – and untaxed profits at that – they gained a powerful ally in the advertising industry, whose requests for some kind of national commercial radio had been turned down by successive Governments in the pre-pirate years.

Actual ownership of the stations rested mainly with obscure American trust funds. Radio England, for instance, was registered in the name of a British company (Pier Vick Ltd) but was almost wholly financed by a syndicate of US investors, while Radio London was owned by the Marine Investment Co Inc of Freeport in the Bahamas, which spent £500,000 on launching the station and registering the ship in Liechtenstein. Some stations, too, had dealings with wealthy American religious organisations like the Seventh Day Adventist School, who paid thousands of pounds for broadcasting 15-minute sermons.

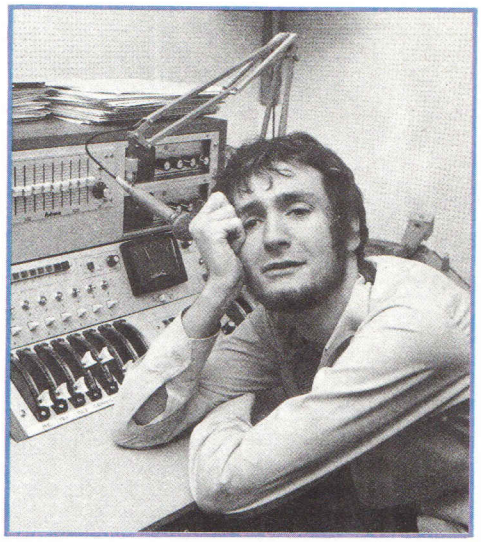
End of an era

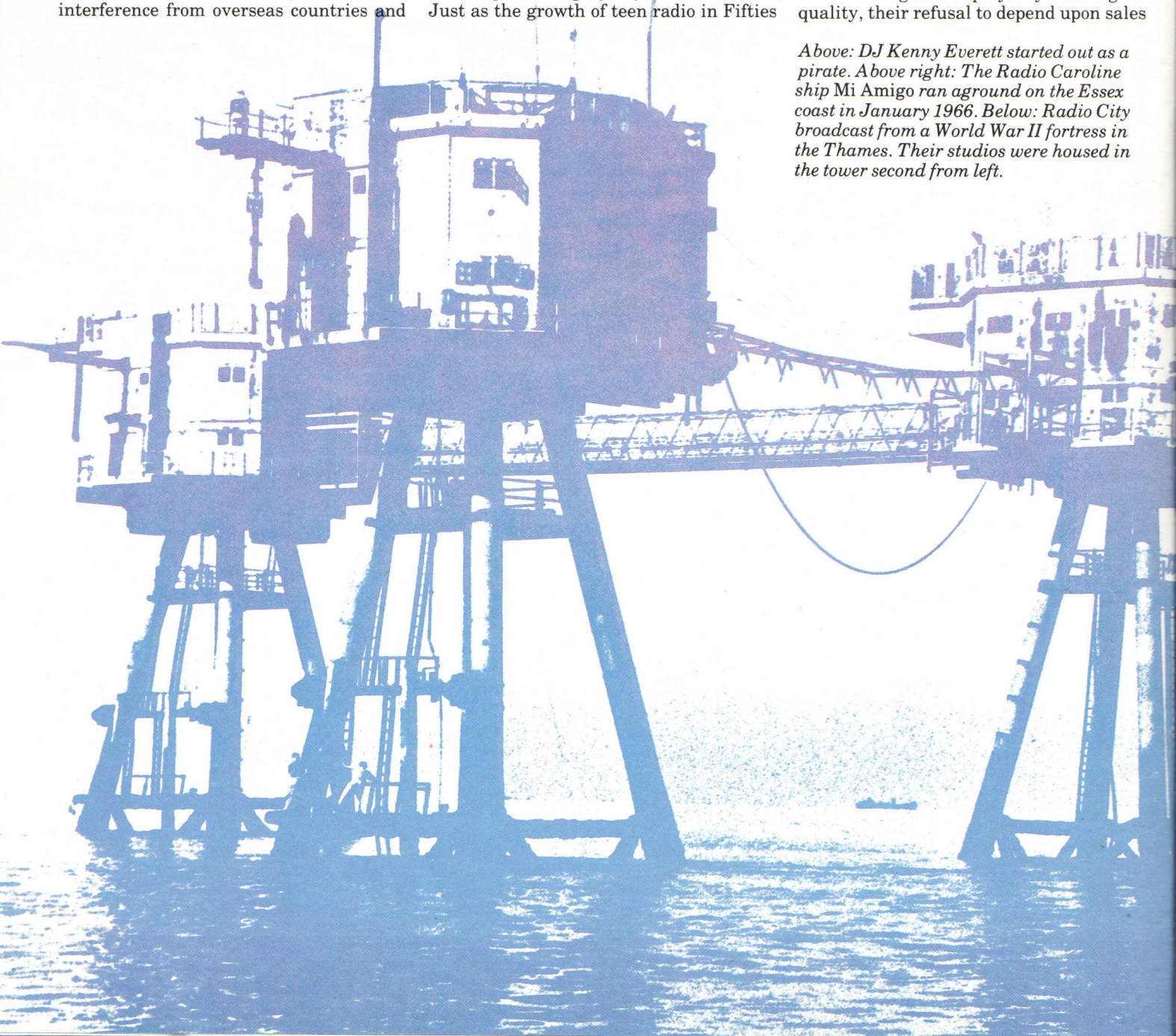
With the exact nature of the stations' financial backing shrouded in mystery, it was inevitable that they would fall prey to crises of ownership, behind-the-scenes double-dealing and the occasional real act of piracy. Initially regarded as harmless and even admirable upholders of the spirit of free enterprise, the pirates began to earn themselves a distinctly sordid reputation during 1966, especially following the murder of Radio City owner Reg Calvert at the home of Radio Atlanta founder Major Oliver Smedley. Many unsavoury facts about the pirate radio station business came to light during the trial and, though Smedley was acquitted, it had the effect of turning public and Government opinion firmly against the stations' continuance. The Marine Broadcasting (Offences) Act duly became law on 15 August 1967, and all but Radio Caroline decided to close down.

There were many reasons for the Government's opposition to pirate radio, including streams of complaints about interference from overseas countries and the fact that the broadcasters were accountable to no one. The pirates did at least force a rethink in Government broadcasting policy, however, and it was in response to the obvious popularity of the outlawed stations that the BBC was directed to set up its own pop network, Radio One, which came on the air in 1967.

Manned almost entirely by ex-pirate staff, the new station was nevertheless seen by many as an unsatisfactory alternative: needle-time restrictions and a ridiculously limited playlist led to a loss of spontaneity, while the lack of competition inspired complacency among the disc jockeys and a musical conservatism among its producers. The influence of the pirates remained predominant for many years, with the DJs continuing to play jingles and 'commercials' (this time for other BBC programmes). But only in the Seventies did Radio One really begin to gain an identity all its own, thanks mostly to an influx of new presenters and an extension in broadcasting hours.

The pirate legacy was considerable. Just as the growth of teen radio in Fifties America helped fuel the rock'n'roll boom, so British pop music benefited enormously from the sustained exposure that the pirates gave it between 1964 and 1967. Their willingness to play any disc of good quality, their refusal to depend upon sales





Above: DJ Kenny Everett started out as a pirate. Above right: The Radio Caroline ship Mi Amigo *ran aground on the Essex coast in January 1966. Below: Radio City broadcast from a World War II fortress in the Thames. Their studios were housed in the tower second from left.*

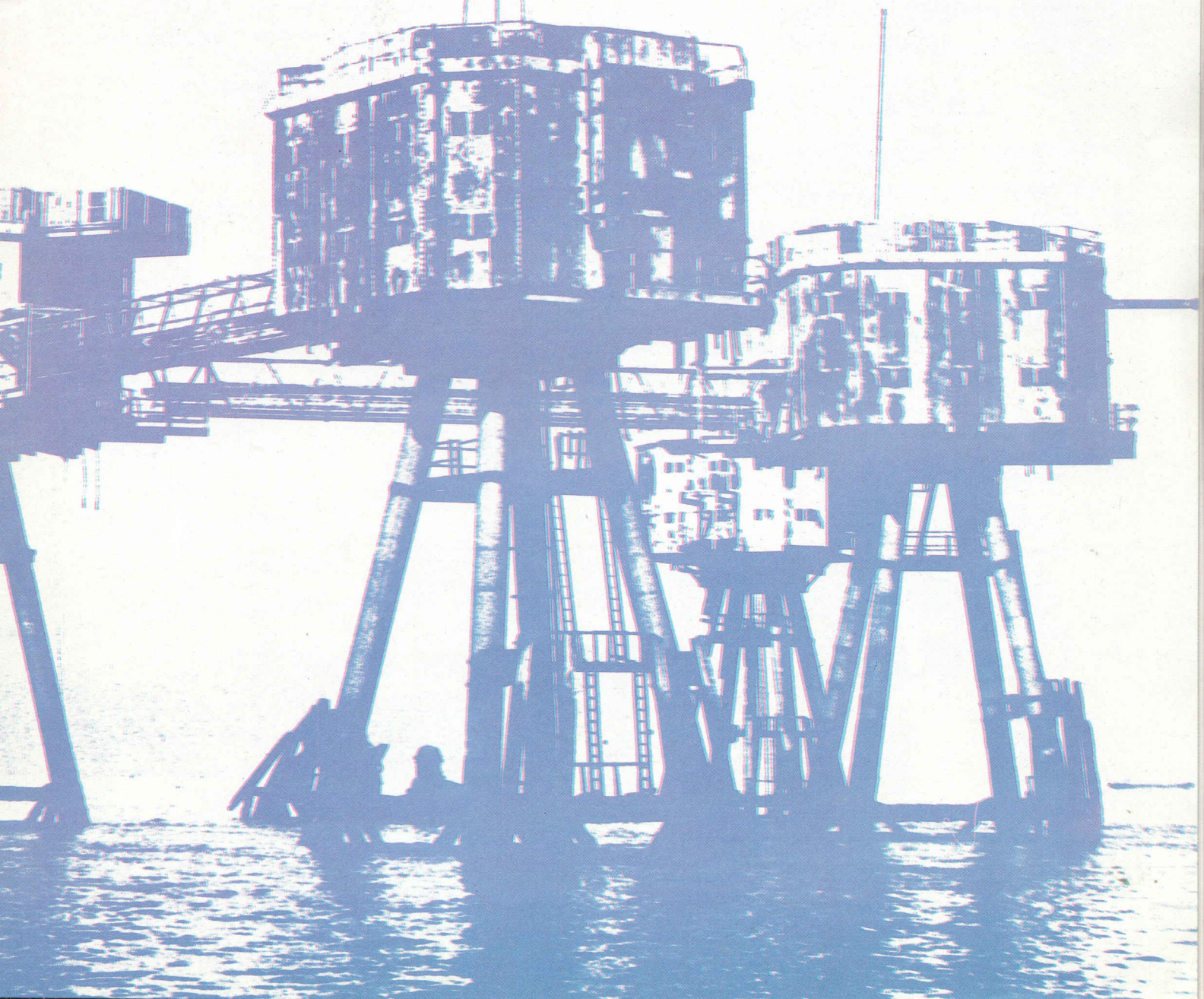
charts and their obsessive youth orientation all added to the interest in and diversity of pop in the UK. They proved conclusively, too, that demand for some kind of alternative radio did exist.

At their height, both Caroline and London claimed an audience of over eight million, and advertisers became aware for the first time of the potential of radio as a promotional medium. The British record industry also realised the benefits of making more broadcasting outlets available.

Most of those who entered pirate radio in the mid Sixties – programme directors, backroom staff and financiers as well as disc jockeys – did so with the long-term aim of becoming involved in commercial radio on land and regarded such broadcasting as a useful apprenticeship, a means of proving ability. They had to wait for several years (and for a new Government) before commercial radio became legal in Britain: when it did, in 1973, the experience of the pirate years proved useful to broadcasters and backers alike.

Most important of all, the pirates helped resurrect a moribund medium. In the early Sixties, radio was in decline, its role as the nation's prime source of entertainment and news usurped by television: by the Seventies and Eighties radio was commonplace and boasted an accessibility that television could not match. The pirates were largely responsible for this rebirth in British radio, and for making pop music the central factor in radio programming from the Seventies.

STEPHEN BARNARD



Where styles were set and fashions invented

UP TO THE MID FIFTIES the central London village that we call Soho – a maze of eighteenth-century streets and alleys bounded by Charing Cross Road, Shaftesbury Avenue, Regent Street and Oxford Street – possessed many quiet backwaters. One of the quietest and least sleazy of these was Carnaby Street.

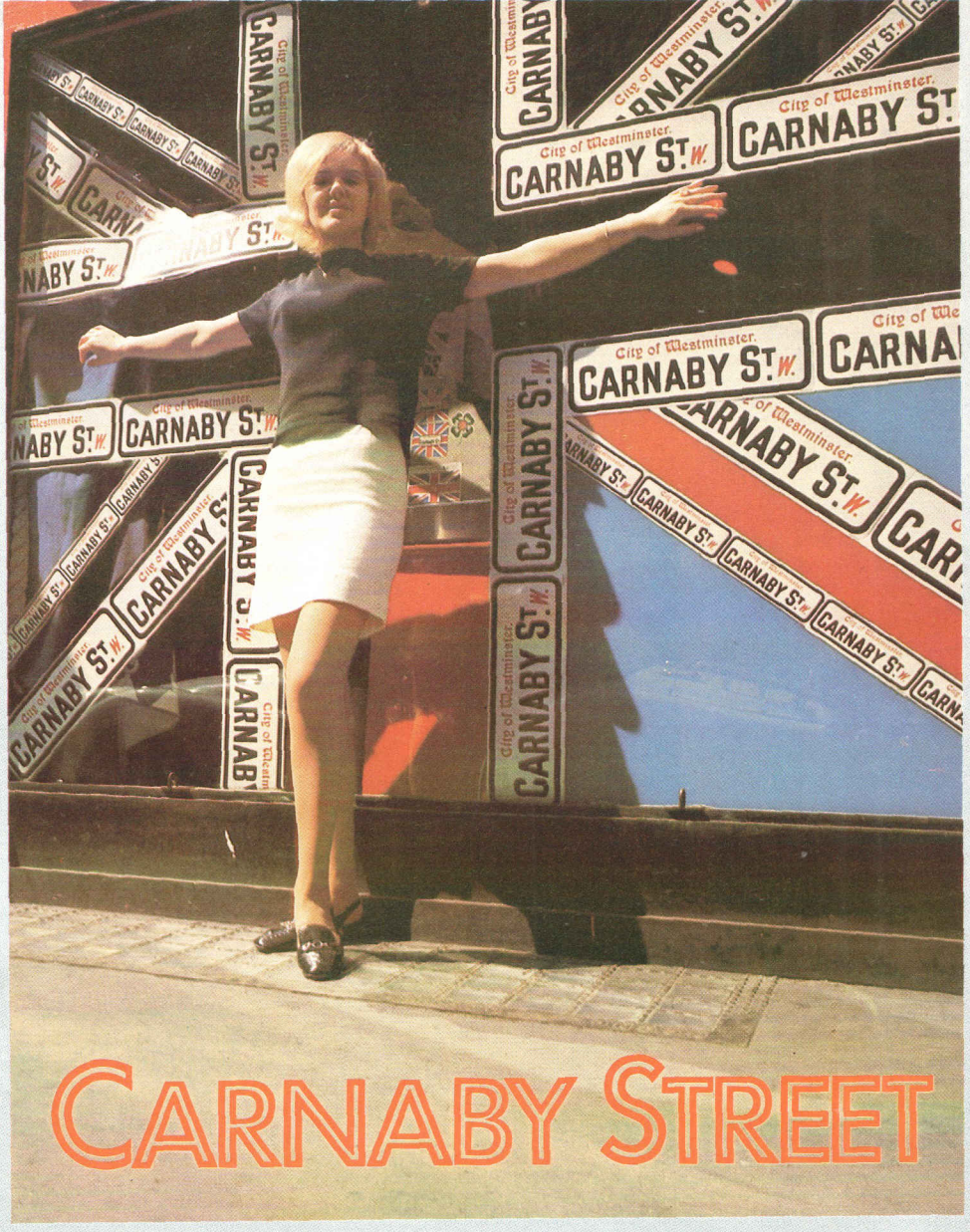
Here, besides a bakery, a rather faded tobacconist's, a harness shop with a life-size wooden horse in its window and a Central Electricity Board depot that took up almost half one side of the street, you could find innumerable little sweat-shops, an overflow from the garment industry district north of Oxford Circus. And here Mr Vince got his first creations made up.

Brief lives

Vince (does anybody remember his surname?) was a photographer, with a tiny basement studio in Manchester Street, Marylebone. He specialised in beefcake, but not the oiled, anabolic steroid-crammed musclemen of today. Vince's models were of a genteeler kind, but totally ignorant of what to wear while they posed. They apparently expected to be photographed in the Y-fronts in which they arrived. It became clear that he would have to carry a stock of posing briefs and similar clothing ready for his unprepared posers – and in the austerity years around 1950 such things were hard to come by.

The solution was obvious: he designed his own, had them made up, and found that he had a profitable line of business on the side. Soon, you could buy 'Vince designs' by mail order through small advertisements in magazines like *Weekend* or *Titbits*, or retail at Geo. Grose, the big motorcycle dealers and sports shop in the Marylebone Road.

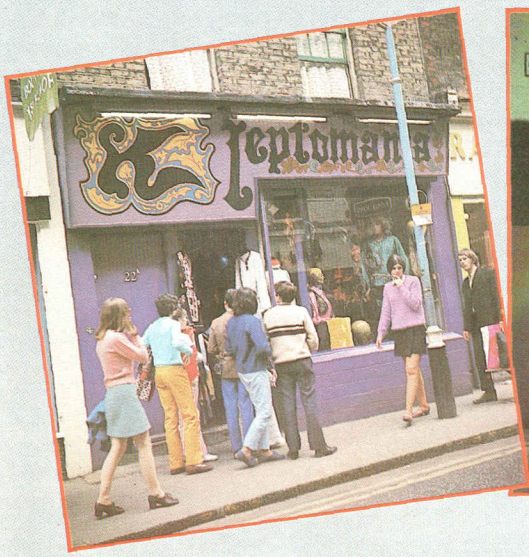
Next came made-to-measure jeans, and Vince took a lease on a small shop in Carnaby Street, conveniently close to the workshops where the orders could be run up almost at an hour's notice. Very soon he had a neighbour and rival, when the shop of Donis carrying a stock of ready-made jeans opened up next door.

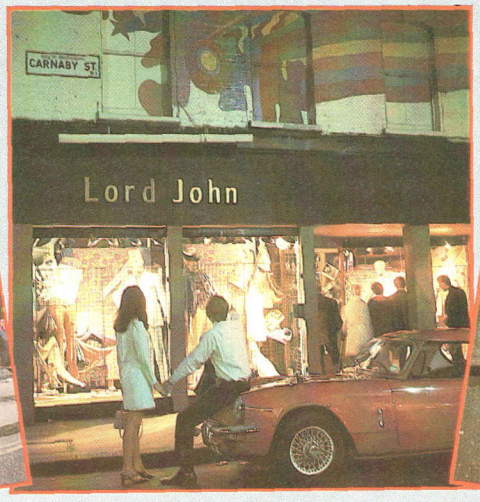


After Donis came Paul, and after Paul the little shops began to proliferate. It was all so convenient. The trousers and jeans were left with bottoms unfinished: you found a pair to fit you, the assistant marked the correct leg length, and then he scampered up the stairs next-door to the workshop above, to return five minutes later with your trousers neatly finished and pressed.

A natural outcome of this set-up was instant fashion: a new style of jacket, a fancy waistcoat, a new cut of jeans – they could all be put together in sample quanti-

From a quaint, quiet thoroughfare, Carnaby Street (above) was transformed into the heart of Swinging England. Its best-known boutiques included (below, from left) Kleptomania, Lord John and Trecamp.

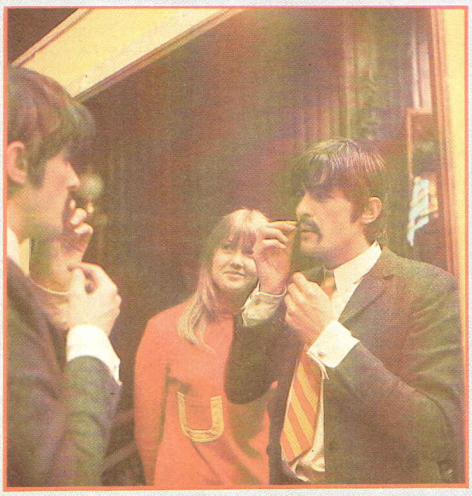




ties, and if they caught on they could be multiplied at will. The Carnaby Street 'men's boutique' took over from Cecil Gee; the sharp Italian style of the professional band musicians gave way to the slick, faintly 'camp' suits of the Fab Four, selected for them by Brian Epstein.

Trecamp, the first shop selling female clothing, opened in Carnaby Street; next came Lady Jane; and then the full flood of unisex. At a place like Kleptomania – more a bazaar than a boutique – you could buy a man's shirt that would serve just as well as a minidress, and belts and jeans that could be worn either by men or women.

But that word 'bazaar' reveals the worm in the bud: the days of Carnaby Street's rise to fame were also the days of its first decline. And you could perhaps, blame it all on the 'pop' artist Peter Blake. Those printed tin badges, those Edwardian relics, those Union Jacks; 'I was Lord Kitchener's Valet', dedicated to selling reproduction kitsch to tourists, originally opened in Piccadilly Circus, but it soon found its spiritual home in Carnaby Street.



It fitted the spirit of the time; it chimed with that extraordinary concept of Swinging England – 'England swings like a pendulum do' sang that old vaudeville hoofer, Roger Miller, in 1966 – that went with the Beatles and the Stones and Herman's Hermits and, above all, the Who.

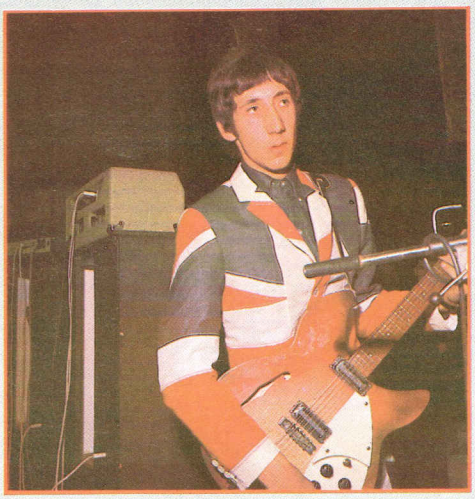
Union Jacks and Lord John

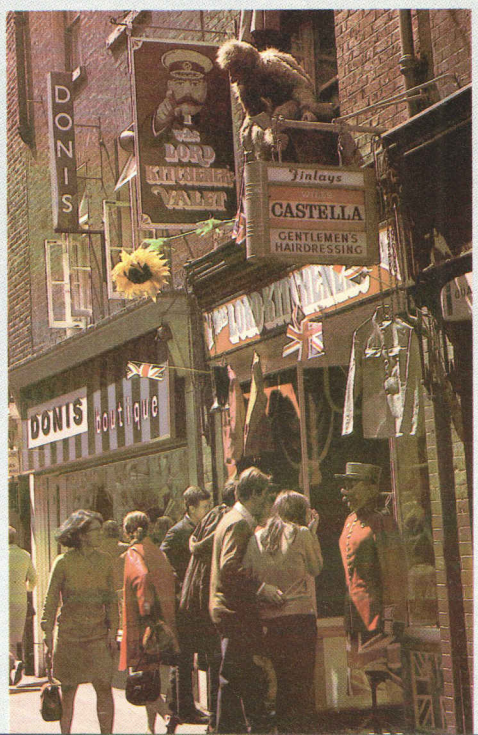
What a ridiculous mish-mash it all was! The Mods in their Regency suits and fur-lined ex-US Army parkas, mounted on their Vespas and Lambrettas; the Who, in the vanguard of rock, wearing Union Jack jackets; the tiny cardboard reproductions of policemen's helmets, the red-white-and-blue-striped seaside rock. Carnaby Street, where you could now buy tweed Norfolk jackets and deerstalkers and elastic-sided boots, had its pavements and roadway painted with Union Jacks, and all the kids of Europe and America seemed to be gathered there in T-shirts and climbing boots and boaters made out of recycled paper.

The big clothing wholesalers, under a variety of fancy names – the Earl of Tooting, Lord John of Carnaby – moved in, and the small specialist boutiques moved out. But Carnaby Street had done something for the British attitude to clothes: take a look in Burtons or Horne Bros today, and you'll see the fruits of Mr Vince's pioneering.

BRIAN INNES

The period reflected delight in all things English. A George Harrison-style moustache is tried on for size (above left) while military tunics are displayed outside 'I was Lord Kitchener's Valet' (above). Below: Pete Townshend, proud to be British. Right: Premises of Donis and 'I was Lord Kitchener's Valet'.





WELL RESPECTED MEN

The Kinks: proto punks or social commentators?

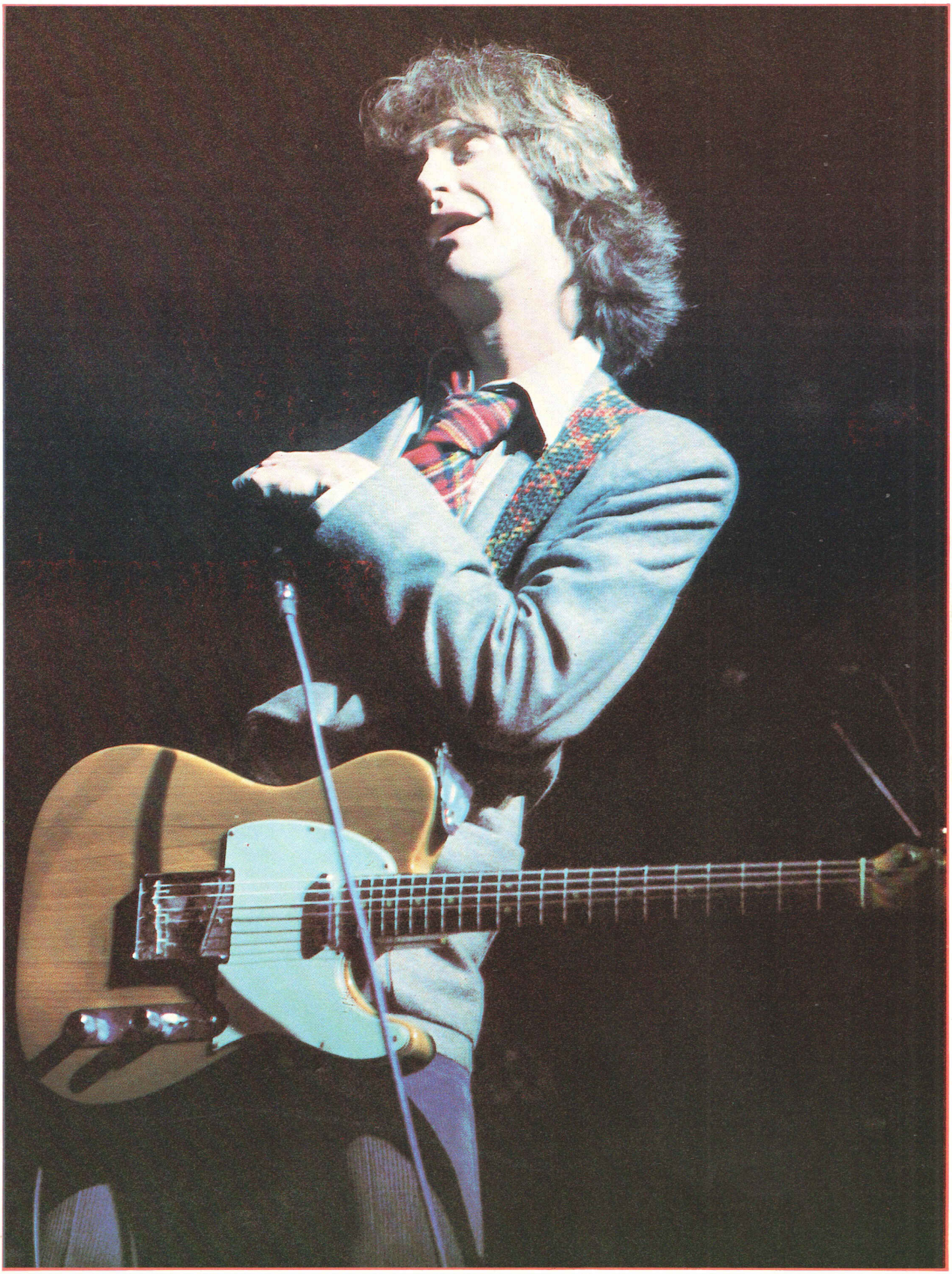
WHEN THE KINKS were signed to the Pye label in 1963, they had already been in existence for a couple of years but they still projected a lack of musicianship, discipline and an ineptness in performance that suggested their recording career would be brief. Even the devastating 'You Really Got Me', the group's first hit and a song of proto-punk primitiveness, grand simplicity and frantic delivery, was not enough to suggest that the Kinks were anything more than just another one-hit wonder. But by 1965 they had shown themselves to be much more than that for, in Raymond Douglas Davies, they possessed a songwriter of immense talent. And by the end of the decade, through work that was quite out of step with prevailing trends, the Kinks had proven themselves true originals.

The nucleus of the group was the Davies brothers, Raymond Douglas (born in Muswell Hill, London on 21 June 1944) and Dave (3 February 1947); while at art school the brothers graduated from a passing interest in rock'n'roll and blues to fully fledged R&B. Having met up with ex-skiffler and drummer Mick Avory (born 15 February 1944) and bassist Peter Quaife (23 December 1943), they got together to back singer Robert Wace. Wace was a regular on the deb circuit, and when he became the group's manager in 1962 they naturally took his place on the bandstand at the deb functions as first the Ramrods and then the Ravens. Dressed uncomfortably and inelegantly in ill-fitting hunting jackets, frills and lace, they caught the eye of producer Shel Talmy who secured them a contract with Pye Records. And, unlike other groups, the Kinks enjoyed a relatively good working relationship with the producer.

However, after their first record, a Beatles-inspired version of Little Richard's 'Long Tall Sally' which flopped in February 1964, a lengthy career didn't really seem likely for the Kinks. This early failure was repeated with their second record, the equally undistinguished 'You Do Something To Me', in April. These numbers saw the group stranded between R&B, beat music and ineffectual pop.

But then Ray Davies came up with 'You Really Got Me', a piece of simplistic, hard-driving rock. With Talmy's excitingly raw production, the song went to the top of the UK charts and reached Number 7 in the States.

Below: The Kinks in their early days – from left, Peter Quaife, Mick Avory, Dave Davies and Ray Davies. Opposite: Ray Davies steps into the limelight.



Dapper Dave Davies donned dandy dress to serenade the death of a clown (below), while the rest of the Kinks cultivated that Strange Effect (right).

The series of singles that followed was astounding – 'All Day And All Of The Night' in 1964 and 'Tired Of Waiting For You', 'Everybody's Gonna Be Happy', 'Set Me Free', 'See My Friend' and 'Till The End Of The Day' all in 1965. Each reflected Ray Davies' growing confidence as a songwriter and revealed a developing harmonic complexity that marked the group out as something special. Taken together the six singles formed a series that told of the singer's entrapment by his lover and then of his growing disenchantment and melancholy. Furthermore, all (apart from 'Everybody's Gonna Be Happy', which peaked at Number 17) made the UK Top Ten and 'Tired Of Waiting For You' went to Number 1. They established the Kinks as a group not far behind the Beatles and the Rolling Stones in terms of popularity.

'Writing for myself'

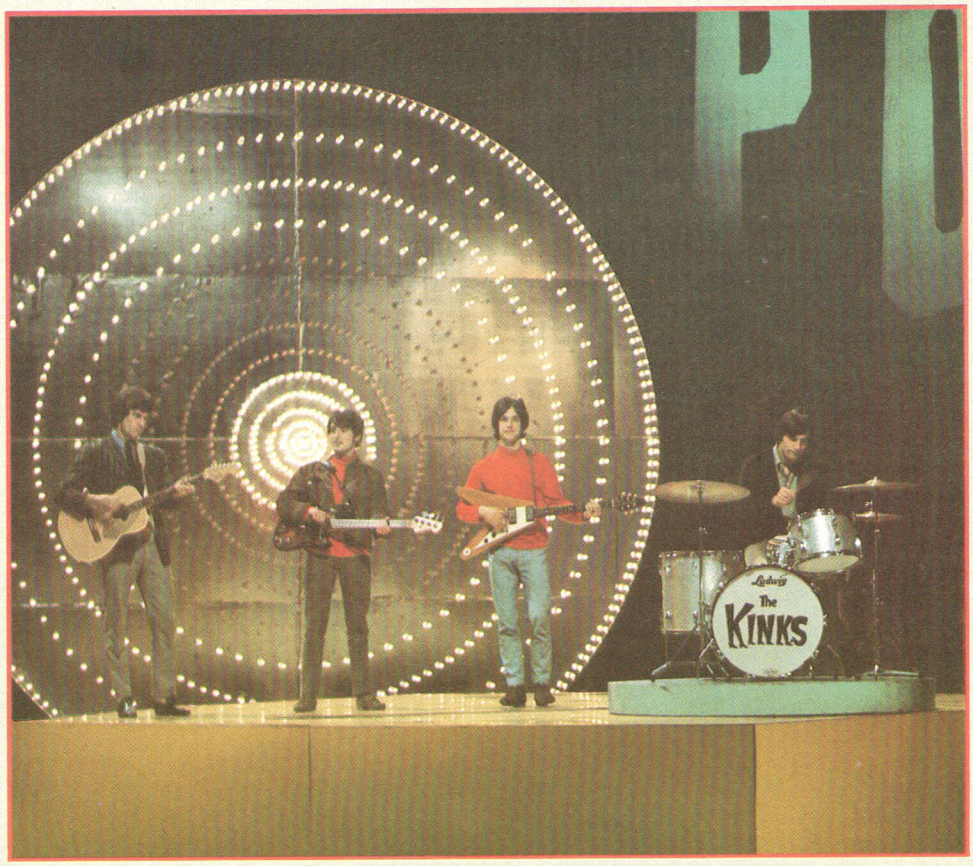
Ray Davies practised his songwriting craft outside the group, too, penning songs for the Applejacks ('I Go To Sleep', later recorded by Peggy Lee as well as the Pretenders) and Dave Berry ('This Strange Effect') among others. None of his compositions for outsiders made much of an impact however, and from 1966 he devoted all his attention to the Kinks. It was now that he moved away from love lyrics to songs of social comment, having decided, as he said, 'to stop writing for other people and start writing for myself'.

It was an apposite moment to change: with Swinging London all the rage and Britain smugly celebrating its lead in music, fashion and youth culture in gener-

al, prime targets offered themselves for Davies' gently cynical observation. This change was signalled by 'Dedicated Follower Of Fashion', which reached Number 4 in March 1966.

In the song, Davies directed his attention to the inhabitants of Swinging London and, in so doing, distanced himself from his peers. The gibes at fashion consciousness proved none too subtle, however, and the song's jaunty, singalong atmosphere came as a surprise after the strength of previous singles. But with *Face To Face,* the 1966 album, he was to exhibit a greater subtlety and maturity combined with an acidity and cynicism that was quite out of step with the celebratory times – despite its fashionable sleeve illustration.

The main targets of *Face To Face* were the *nouveau riche* and once again the decadence and self-absorption of Swinging London. Davies' intentions were clearly satiric, but he was careful to give the songs a degree of ambiguity; thus the Kinks' rather cold version of 'Dandy' could be, and was, easily transformed into the



Right: The Kinks in action on British television in 1964. Below: The group in discussion with Monkee Mike Nesmith (seated at left).

innocuous piece of 'cutesy-pie' that effortlessly rewarded Herman's Hermits with an American Number 5 hit. 'Sunny Afternoon', which gave the group their third British chart-topper, was the key song on the album, a hymn to laziness that contrasted the fixity (and occasional warmth) of the sun with the transitory possessions of a bankrupt pop star, sung in Ray Davies' most appealing style. 'Dead End Street', which reached Number 5 in the UK charts in November 1966, showed the other side of the coin with its utterly bleak vision of poverty and urban decay.

Face To Face indicated a concern with matters English; on *Something Else,* the following year, that concern took over completely. Moreover, in marked contrast to other groups like the Beatles, Byrds, Beach Boys and even the Stones, who were exploring the technological possibilities of the studio, *Something Else* – with its sad Tea Dance melodies only occasionally enlivened by the frenetic rhythms of the Kinks' brand of rock'n'roll – resembled 45 minutes of jaded music hall rather than progressive rock 1967-style. At times, Davies consciously imitated the language of the past (as in 'Harry Rag' with its cockney rhyming slang), its tunes ('Tin Soldier Man' with its Victorian march atmosphere) and its mannered vocal styles (as on 'End Of The Season'). By evoking the past, Davies seemed to be confronting a present that he was less than happy with.

Nonetheless, the album contained humour too. 'David Watts' (which the Jam would later revive successfully) contrasted the singer, a 'poor and simple lad', with Watts, who not only took his exams and passed the lot but was captain of everything at school. 'And all the girls in the neighbourhood try to go out with David Watts,' sang Davies with feelings that flitted between envy and irony. *Something Else* also contained a rare composition by brother Dave in 'Death Of A Clown' which, released as a single, reached Number 3 in 1967. (Though three other Dave Davies singles followed, only one, 'Susannah's Still Alive', reached the UK Top Fifty.) Dave's songs demanded a brasher rock backing than those of his brother and harked back to the earlier Kinks style.

Detached observer

The album's closing track, 'Waterloo Sunset', saw Ray Davies accept his status as an observer rather than a participant; over the most fragile of harmonies, Davies, with true poetic economy, paints the simple (and ever so English) picture of lovers meeting across the river at Waterloo underground station as observed from his lonely window. Henceforth, the position of the detached observer (which would reach its bizarre climax on *Soap Opera* with Davies observing himself) was to dominate the Kinks' material. Such a view was not particularly remarkable for the period – consider the melancholy that suffuses much of the Byrds' work or the crescendo of sadness and lost innocence of the Beach Boys' *Pet Sounds* – but what distinguished Davies' detachment and isolation was the eloquence of its expression and the compassion and clarity that flowed from it. This was best heard on the two masterpieces that followed, *(The Kinks Are) The Village Green Preservation Society* (1968) and *Arthur, Or The Decline And Fall Of The British Empire* (1969).

These two revealed new heights of maturity, both in Davies' writing and the band's abilities to translate his songs; but back in 1968, Pye were losing confidence in the group. 'Waterloo Sunset' had made Number 2 and 'Autumn Almanac', a delightful tribute to working-class pleasures, made Number 3 in 1967. But after these, with the exception of the beautiful 'Days', which briefly made the Top Twenty in 1968, the group had no substantial hits either at home or in the United States until 'Lola' in 1970. The reasons for this were many. At a time when psychedelia, kaftans, dayglo and incense were rife, the Kinks' more down-to-earth concerns were highly unfashionable. Worse, the musical

verities in which the Kinks traded were mundane by comparison to the new experimentation of, say, Jimi Hendrix or Pink Floyd.

The Kinks' relationship with Pye was not aided by the company's intensive recycling of the group's recorded material; this had the effect of devaluing the Kinks' new albums, which were given scant promotion. *Something Else* was the last album produced by Shel Talmy whose collaboration with the group, though it never mirrored that of George Martin and the Beatles, had been extraordinary fruitful. Where other producers might have worried as Ray Davies quit the raucous sound of 'Till The End Of The Day' for the delicacy of 'Days', Talmy encouraged these developments.

Pye, however, were less than pleased by Talmy's departure, coming as it did just as Davies seemed to have lost his knack of writing instant hits. Accordingly, when Davies played the tapes of the group's next album, *Four More Respected Gentlemen* to the people at Pye, they refused to release it in the simple minded belief that if the Kinks couldn't sell singles they could hardly expect to make albums. The blocked release was eventually beneficial, forcing Ray to sort through the Kinks' recorded material and thereby coming up with the idea for *Village Green Preservation Society*, which proved to be one of the first concept albums.

Shangri La

The surprising thing is that, with relations between the company and group so strained, they were able to produce masterpieces like *Village Green* and *Arthur*. The first album saw Davies looking back in earnest to a make-believe Edwardian Britain, where life was ordered and meaning was certain. The title track summed it all up: 'We are the Office Block Persecution Affinity, God save little shops, china cups and virginity.' This retreat back into the past was as ambiguous as ever: on 'Walter', the singer longed to meet his friend of long ago, only to realise he'd have nothing to say, while the sun that shone on the Village Green (here called 'Big Sky') is as uncaring yet as attractive as ever. The result was less a nostalgic look back than an attempt to create an idealised past with which to confront the present.

This desire was further intensified in *Arthur*, which saw John Dalton (born 21 May 1943) replace Quaife on bass. The album also marked a further broadening of Davies' interests. He'd written film music before (for *Virgin Soldiers*) and would do so again (for *Percy*), but *Arthur* was the first of his many attempts to combine music and theatre. Commissioned by Granada Television from Davies and Julian Mitchell, it told the tale of Arthur's flight from Britain to Australia in response to the dead weight of the past. For in Arthur's Britain the social order of the Victorian era was still all-powerful and he was expected to fight and work for meagre rewards. Three songs, in particular, suggest the power and, as ever, ambiguity of the album. 'Every Mother's Son' is a superb lament for the dead of all wars, its melancholic refrain contrasting with the pure escapism of the jauntily-constructed 'Drivin' '.

But it was 'Shangri La' that was the most achingly beautiful and controversial song of the album. The song both celebrates the efforts to achieve one's own Shangri La and become a home-owner, and at the same time attempts to demystify the paradise-on-earth view of the owner-occupier that Arthur is trapped in. The song's sad conclusion, 'You're in your place and you know where you are', is sung by Davies in his most compassionate voice. Needless to say, due to Pye's neglect and the unfashionable nature of the subject-matter, the album was a commercial disaster.

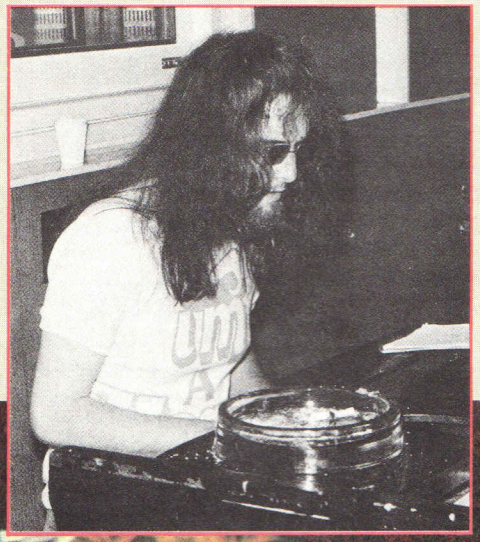
By the end of the decade, the group had made up their minds to seek a more supportive company and left Pye with a final album, *Lola Versus Powerman And The Moneygoround*, in 1970. Having summed up the pressures and pleasures of the past on previous albums, Davies moved on to an examination of the Kinks' own situation. The songs this time were harsher in sound, and more bitter lyrically, as managers, record companies, unions and greed-mongers were all given a lashing. The album and its marvellous single 'I'm Glad I'm A Man And So Is Lola', Davies' salute to the ambiguous charms of 'Lola' – which reached the British and US Top Ten late in 1970 – marked a new lease of life for the group.

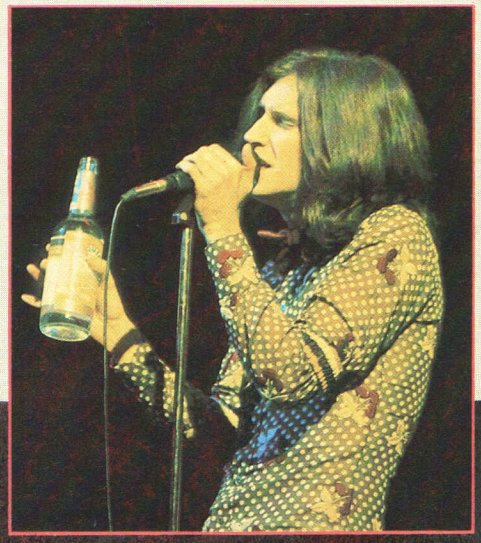
Fraternal loyalties

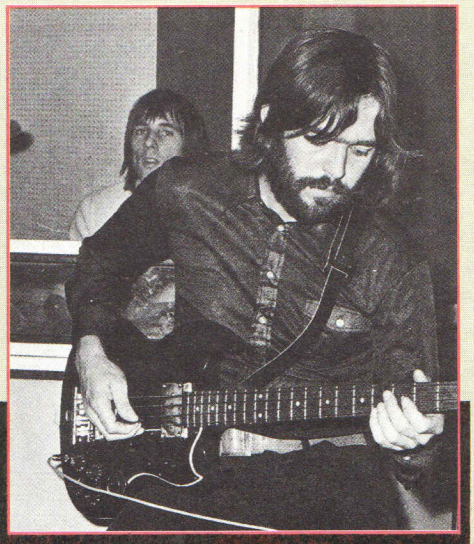
The success of 'Lola' in America sent the Kinks there to capitalise on the cult following that Reprise, their US company, had built up. Reprise had assiduously searched through Pye's files for the mass of unreleased material by the group and had compiled albums, such as *The Kink Kronikles* and *The Great Lost Kinks Album*, with thought and care. The Kinks' tours of America in the early Seventies were odd affairs to say the least. They had toured there in 1965 but their 'unprofessional conduct' had led to them being banned, for a time, by the American Federation of Musicians. *Live At Kelvin Hall* (1967), the first Kinks album produced by Ray Davies, demonstrated just what he required of an audience – constant screams of approval, over which the Kinks could hardly be heard. When the Kinks resumed touring with a vengeance in the Seventies their concerts became strange exercises in theatre of cruelty.

Ray Davies' private life at this time was in a state of disarray: his marriage was breaking up and he was drinking heavily. On stage he made little attempt to perform his songs with any conviction – preferring the audience to sing them for him – and would, on occasion, topple over the amplifiers. In addition, the Davies brothers often exhibited an antipathy towards one another that sometimes manifested itself in on-stage argument. However, although rumours that the two would split had abounded for years – ever

The Kinks in the Seventies. Opposite: John Gosling (left) joined on keyboards, Ray Davies (centre) drank tequila, and John Dalton (right) had replaced Peter Quaife on bass. Below: The group sang songs of disenchantment, reflected in deliberately seedy stage settings.







since Dave's first solo single – fraternal loyalties remained, and in 1971 the group signed a new contract with RCA.

The first album for the new company was *Muswell Hillbillies,* which featured new member John Gosling on keyboards. The album continued the themes of *Village Green,* with songs about tea and alcohol, but only intermittently (as on 'Oklahoma USA' and 'Uncle Son') did it have the power of the earlier album. Similarly *Everybody's In Show Biz – Everybody's A Star* (1972) continued the themes of *Lola*; but only 'Celluloid Heroes' – which saw Davies longing for the anaesthetised immortality of film stardom, because 'celluloid heroes never feel any pain . . . never really die' – rose to the heights of their past work. In place of the compassion and wit of that was an ease and flippancy that was to dog the group's subsequent career.

Schoolboys in disgrace

Preservation, Act One (1973) saw the group further enlarged to include a horn section – comprised of Alan Holmes, Laurie Brown and John Beecham – and essaying a stage show of the sort that was to complement all their RCA albums, *Act Two* (1974), *Soap Opera* (1975) and *Schoolboys In Disgrace* (1976). All but *Soap Opera* were too unwieldy to work either on stage or on record. *Soap Opera* had its origins in a TV musical commissioned, once more, by Granada and tells the story of a 'star' (Ray Davies) surveying suburbia for material for a new album and slowly succumbing to its 'attractions', until at the end he isn't sure who he is, Norman Normal or Ray Davies.

Though it boded well for the future, their later albums were commercial rather than critical successes. The Kinks' theatrical performances, featuring Ray Davies' camp swagger and the heavy-metal guitar of his brother, were now designed for American consumption; *Sleepwalker*, their first album for Arista in 1977, gave the group, now devoid of brass, an American hit album, even though it lacked a single hit to pave the way. But their concerts revealed a band that had lost inspiration, Ray Davies leading the audience through sing-along versions of the hits with little respect for the original sound. Records, too, lost virtually all their previous distinctiveness; the concerns were similar but they were expressed with banal melodies, uninspired rock backings and tired cliches as displayed throughout *Low Budget,* the group's 1981 outing (and another American success). *Give The People What They Want* appeared in 1982.

Yet the Kinks have survived, and from the late Seventies have become one of the most financially successful groups in the States. They remain together, still performing and recording, which is, in itself, an achievement. Ray Davies has persevered, mining his unique, generally bleak but always compassionate, vision to the end. By all accounts, his determination has been at much cost to his personal life though in the early Eighties this appeared to be settling down with his attachment to Chrissie Hynde, leader of the Pretenders (whose first hit had been a version of the Kinks' 'Stop Your Sobbing'). The Eighties also found the Kinks back in vogue in their homeland as New Wave acts such as the Jam, Glen Matlock's Spectres (who recorded a version of 'This Strange Effect'), and the Pretenders themselves paid tribute to the group's early sound.

Ray Davies' vision of England as a place riddled with class divisions and his espousal of the nation's popular culture was responsible for some of the most appealing pop music of the Sixties. Whether his unique vision is capable of further refinement remains in doubt, but his achievement as it stands is impressive enough.

PHIL HARDY

No regrets: Ray Davies (below) acknowledges the applause of the audience.

THE KINKS
Discography (to 1971)

Singles
Long Tall Sally/I Took My Baby Home (Pye 7N15611, 1964); You Still Want Me/You Do Something To Me (Pye 7N15636, 1964); You Really Got Me/It's Alright (Pye 7N15673, 1964); All Day And All Of The Night/I Gotta Move (Pye 7N15714, 1964); Tired Of Waiting For You/Come On Now (Pye 7N15759, 1965); Everybody's Gonna Be Happy/Who'll Be The Next In Line (Pye 7N15813, 1965); Set Me Free/I Need You (Pye 7N15854, 1965); See My Friends/Never Met A Girl Like You Before (Pye 7N15919, 1965); Till The End Of The Day/Where Have All The Good Times Gone (Pye 7N15981, 1965); Dedicated Follower Of Fashion/Sitting On My Sofa (Pye 7N17064, 1966); Sunny Afternon/I'm Not Like Everybody Else (Pye 7N17152, 1966); Deadend Street/Big Black Smoke (Pye 7N17222, 1966); Waterloo Sunset/Act Nice And Gentle (Pye 7N17321, 1967); Autumn Almanac/Mr Pleasant (Pye 7N17400, 1967); Wonderboy/Polly (Pye 7N17468, 1968); Days/She's Got Everything (Pye 7N17573, 1968); Plastic Man/King Kong (Pye 7N17724, 1969); Driving/Mindless Child Of Motherhood (Pye 7N17776, 1969); Shangri La/This Man He Weeps Tonight (Pye 7N17812, 1969); Victoria/Mr Churchill Says (Pye 7N17865, 1969); Lola/Berkeley Mews (Pye 7N17961, 1970); Apeman/Rats (Pye 7N45016, 1970); God's Children/The Way Love Used To Be/Dreams/Moments (Pye 7NX8001, 1971); You Really Got Me/Set Me Free/Wonder Boy/Long Tall Shorty (Pye PMM100, 1971).

EPs
Kingsize Session (Pye NEP 24200, 1964); *Kingsize Hits* (Pye NEP24203, 1965); *Kwyet Kinks* (Pye NEP 24221, 1965); *Dedicated Kinks* (Pye NEP 24258, 1966); *Something Else* (Pye NEP 24296, 1968).

Albums (selective)
The Kinks (Pye NPL 18096, 1964); *Kinda Kinks* (Pye NPL 18112, 1965); *Kinks Kontroversy* (Pye NPL 18131, 1966); *Well Respected Kinks* (Marble Arch MAL 612, 1966); *Face To Face* (Pye NPL/NSP 18149, 1966); *The Kinks Live At Kelvin Hall* (Pye NPL/NSPL 18191, 1967); *Sunny Afternoon* (Marble Arch MAL/MALS 716, 1967); *Something Else* (Pye NPL/NSPL 18193, 1967); *The Village Green Preservation Society* (Pye NPL/NSPL 18233, 1968); *Arthur, Or The Decline And Fall Of The British Empire* (Pye NPL/NSPL 18317, 1969); *The Kinks* (Pye NPL 18326, 1970, double album); *Kinks Pt 1: Lola Versus Powerman And The Moneygoround* (Pye NSPL 18359, 1970); *Soundtrack From The Film Percy* (Pye NSPL 18365, 1971).

Producers and Sessionmen

The London music scene of the mid Sixties

As British pop expanded in the Sixties, so its successes began to reflect on other areas within the music industry. With an increasing number of singles being released, staff producers now found themselves with an increased workload, and the services of session men, too, were in greater demand. It might have been expected that, in an era of groups, session musicians who had earlier been used for backing solo artists might have disappeared. This was far from the case, however: they became all the more important, as their professionalism brought a competence and quality to what otherwise might have been rough recordings from groups unsure of the discipline and exactness of studio work. Moreover, by the mid Sixties, a new batch of session men had arrived on the scene and these were more sympathetic to the music of the times than the Fifties breed had been towards rock'n'roll. The presence of a regular team of such players allowed the producers to shape more easily the sound of groups under their control.

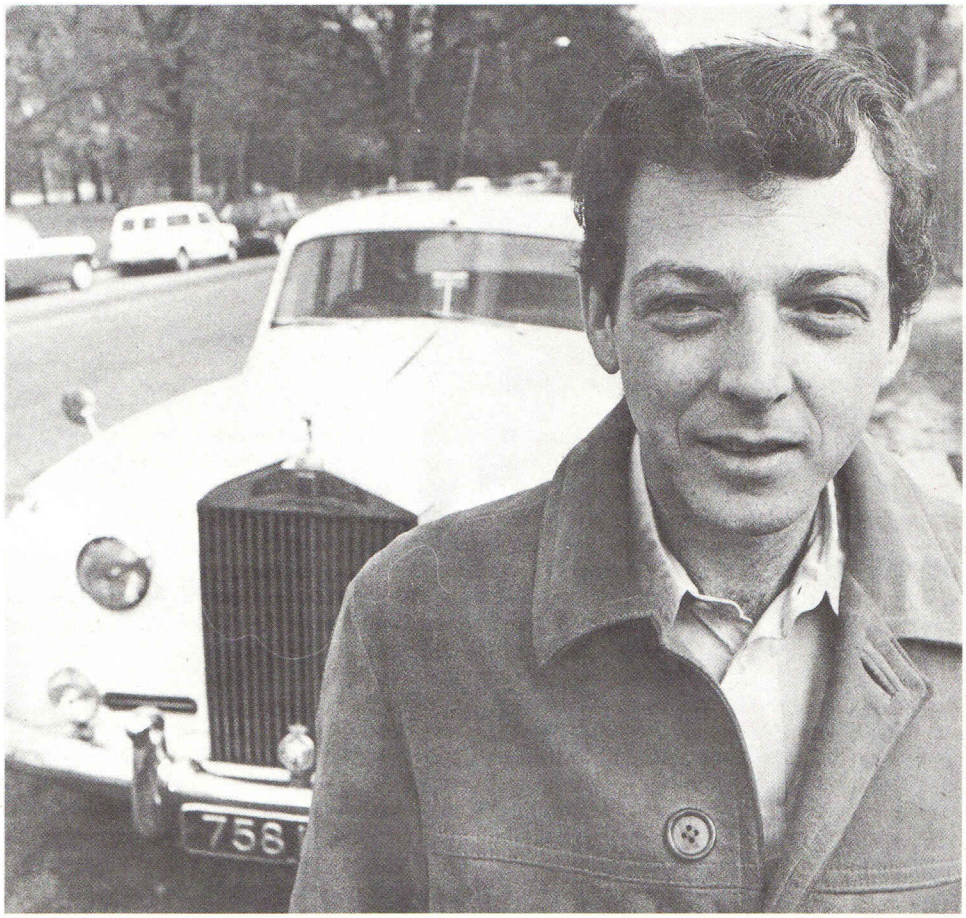
Glyn Johns (above) got pianist Nicky Hopkins his first session dates, and went on himself to produce the Rolling Stones and the Steve Miller Band. Shel Talmy (below) was especially notable for his work with the Kinks and the Who.

The talents of Talmy

Before the mid Sixties the art of record production received little, if any, recognition. Even by 1963, credits were rarely given; the name of George Martin, for example, was absent from the first Beatles album and although it appeared on the second, *With The Beatles*, it would not be printed on any of the group's singles until 'All You Need Is Love' in 1967. For independent producer Mickie Most, however, acknowledgement came earlier; successes in 1964 with the Nashville Teens' 'Tobacco Road' and the Animals' 'House Of The Rising Sun' justified his production credit. But while Most chose to concentrate on commercial success, using his skill to consolidate the careers of such artists as Donovan and Herman's Hermits, a new generation of producers was arriving on the scene, eager for greater studio experimentation. One such was Shel Talmy.

Talmy was born in Chicago in 1938, moved to Los Angeles (where he became, for a time, a classmate of Phil Spector), graduated in psychology and spent three years working in television before becoming an engineer at Conway Records, a small, local studio. There he worked on many surf singles, including the Mar-Kets' 'Surfer's Stomp' which reached the Top Forty in early 1962.

Later that year, Talmy decided to try his luck in England where, on the recommendation of West Coast producer Nik Venet, Decca Records assigned him the task of producing Doug Sheldon and then the Bachelors. His work for the Irish harmony trio included 'Charmaine' and 'Whispering', both sizeable hits, but Talmy was working as an independent pro-



ducer and, as such, received royalties on every record sold; the Bachelors' management objected and the arrangement was terminated. Talmy's other work for Decca included the Dennisons' 'Lucy', the Ronettes-inspired 'Love Hit Me' by the Orchids and 'Summertime Summertime' and 'Caroline' for the Fortunes, the last of which became the theme tune for pirate station Radio Caroline. But it was with Pye Records – and the Kinks – that Talmy was to stamp his individuality on pop music.

He had first heard the Kinks on an acetate when the group were known as the Ravens. He took the acetate to Pye, and the company financed two recording sessions; from the second came 'You Really Got Me', the group's first hit, which went to Number 1 in the autumn of 1964. 'You Really Got Me' confirmed Talmy's excellence in his use of repeated hard riffs to build up tension; the Kinks' previous two singles had flopped, and on this number Talmy certainly took no chances. He drafted in session musicians and these included Jimmy Page and Nicky Hopkins, both to become regular members of Talmy's recording team.

Nicky Hopkins' career had begun when, in 1963, he joined Cyril Davies' All-Stars on piano. In January of the following year, however, ill-health forced him to leave and, by the time he had recovered, the group had split following Davies' death. Hopkins then moved into session work and was to play on many of Talmy's subsequent productions including those by the Who and Creation, on which his distinctive piano fills can be clearly heard. Furthermore, 'Session Man', a track from the Kinks' album *Face To Face*, is obviously dedicated to Hopkins.

Page and pop art

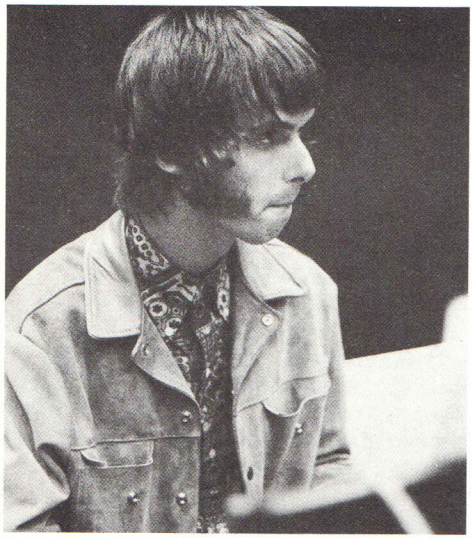
Jimmy Page, meanwhile, had established himself as a session guitarist in 1963 and 1964, playing on Dave Berry's 'Memphis Tennessee' and 'My Baby Left Me', the Redcaps' 'Talking 'Bout You', Them's 'Baby Please Don't Go' and 'Here Comes The Night', and the records of other Decca artists. It was while working for Decca that Page met Talmy, and some of his most individual playing – the shattering break on the First Gear's 'Leave My Kitten Alone', for example – came during collaborations with the producer.

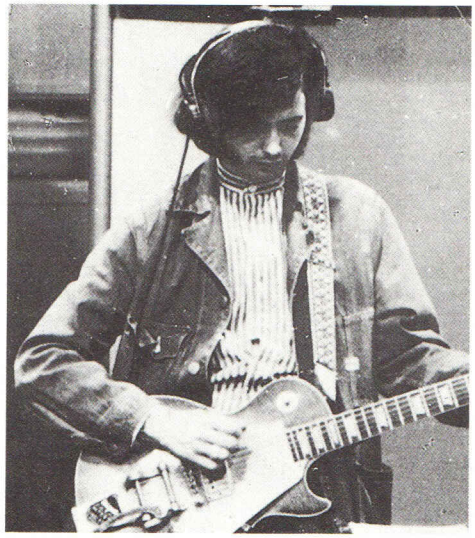
Page did not confine himself to Talmy sessions, however; he played on the second Pretty Things album, *Get The Picture*, along with drummer Bobbie Graham (with whom he co-wrote the opening track, 'You Don't Believe Me'). Later, Page wrote several songs with Jackie DeShannon which were recorded by Judi Smith, among others; her Decca single, 'Leaves Come Tumbling Down', was arranged by Page and he also played on it. The producer of this record was Tony Calder, who formed Immediate Records with Andrew Loog Oldham in 1966, inviting Page to join the company as an A&R man. Page was to be involved in the arrangement, production or playing on many of the new label's early releases, including Fifth Avenue's 'Bells of Rhymney', Nico's 'I'm Not Saying' and John Mayall's 'I'm Your Witchdoctor'.

Above left: Mickie Most, a whizz-kid producer who enjoyed repeated chart success. Above: Chris Blackwell, producer of the Spencer Davis Group's hits. Below left: Tony Calder (left) and Andrew Loog Oldham (right), founders of Immediate Records; artists on the label included John Mayall.

By 1965, success with the Kinks had made Shel Talmy a producer much in demand. He leased some of his productions to Stateside (including singles by the Untamed, the Talismen and Dave Helling) and some to Brunswick (including 'Baby I Got A Long Way To Go' and 'Paris Bells' for guitarist Jon Mark, another session musician). It was during this period that a mutual friend brought Talmy and the Who's manager Kit Lambert together.

Talmy's work with the Who – three singles and one album – totally confirmed his abilities as he helped to create a new British sound, transforming Mod pop-art into its aural equivalent. For the first single, 'I Can't Explain', he again called on the services of session men; Jimmy Page played rhythm (and lead on the B-side, Talmy's own composition 'Bald Headed Woman') while Jon Lord (or possibly Hopkins) played piano and members of the Ivy League provided backing vocals. Session musicians were also utilised on the next two singles, 'Anyway, Anyhow, Anywhere' and 'My Generation', and on the *My Generation* album, and this was to lead to friction between Talmy and the





Pianist Nicky Hopkins (left) and guitarist Jimmy Page (right) both worked on Shel Talmy productions. The T-Bones (below) were managed and produced, along with the Yardbirds, by Giorgio Gomelsky.

members of the Who. In 1966, the group broke with the producer and signed to the Reaction label, though litigation instigated by Talmy ensured that he received royalties on all their records up to, and including, *Tommy* in 1969.

Talmy formed his own label, Planet Records, in December 1965, though this was to have a brief – and largely unsuccessful – lifespan, lasting a mere year and 22 releases. On Planet, Talmy tried to continue to work in the style he had pioneered with the Who, and one of the label's first releases was the Untamed's version of Pete Townshend's 'It's Not True'. This flopped, but Talmy went on to sign Creation who, with their driving Who-type sound, were to give Planet its only minor commercial success.

Dawn of Creation

Creation had a strong vocalist in Kenny Pickett and a dynamic, adventurous guitarist in Eddie Phillips. Their image and ideas, brought to the fore by Talmy's production techniques, were experimental. The group's two singles for Planet, 'Making Time' and 'Painter Man', both of which reached the UK Top Fifty, featured Phillips playing his guitar with a violin bow (a ploy later adopted by Jimmy Page in Led Zeppelin) surrounded by hard riffs and the early drive of the Who.

The Easybeats were the last of Talmy's Mod-influenced groups. They had come from Australia, leaving there a trail of smash hits, to record 'Friday On My Mind' at their initial London session. It was another pop classic, with Talmy's instincts completely right again. But disagreements marred proceedings during the *Good Friday* album sessions and as a result, the LP was completed by Glyn Johns. The Easybeats were disgusted by Talmy's insistence on using session men and the large royalty payments demanded by the producer, and dedicated 'Do You Have A Soul' from the album to Talmy. This echoed the Who's 'Waltz For A Pig', and was equally uncharitable in the light of what he had done for both groups.

By 1967, Talmy's work-load had decreased. Though he produced hits for Manfred Mann – as well as flops for Nicky Hopkins ('Mr. Big', 'Mr. Pleasant', 'The Revolutionary Piano of Nicky Hopkins') – he gradually stopped production, making only the occasional return to the studios during the Seventies.

The success of Talmy (and Most) did much to help the independence of producers. Decca began to give more credits to staff men such as Mike Smith and Tony Scott while, in a move of some significance, four former staff producers – George Martin, Ron Richards (who produced, among others, the Hollies), John Burgess (Manfred Mann) and Pete Sullivan – formed AIR studios in 1965, giving them the freedom to work with acts they themselves chose. One fine example were the Action, whose perfect ability to cover Tamla or Atlantic artists' material, yet add a freshness and originality of their own, was matched by George Martin's excellent production.

Other producers began to appear who were sympathetic to groups who preferred to experiment rather than try for an outright commercial success. Chris Blackwell worked with the Spencer Davis Group, and their early hits, 'Keep On Running' and 'Somebody Help Me', showed no hint of compromise. Then there were producers of longer standing who were able to adapt themselves to the changing times. Ian Samwell, for example, had played briefly with the Drifters behind Cliff Richard in the Fifties and had also written Cliff's first single, 'Move It'. In 1958 he had begun to concentrate on writing and production work; six years later he was working with Georgie Fame and the Blue Flames, capturing the live excitement of the group on their *Rhythm And Blues At The Flamingo* album. Samwell continued to produce for Fame – he helped to take the singer to Number 1 with 'Yeh, Yeh' early in 1965 – but he was able to turn his hand to the new Mod sound, co-writing and producing the first Small Faces single, 'Whatcha Gonna Do 'Bout It'.

Smashed! Blocked!

If Samwell reflected an experienced approach, others were intuitive. Giorgio Gomelsky, initially a promoter, managed the Yardbirds and decided to produce the group himself. His productions spanned the group's earliest recordings of R&B up to the startling changes of 'Shapes Of Things', but his management of the Yardbirds ended in 1966, and that duty – along with production – went to Simon Napier-Bell. His first Yardbirds releases were 'Over Under Sideways Down' and the *Yardbirds* album, both of which immediately confirmed his skill in not only maintaining the group's sound, but using his production skills to enhance the innovatory ideas the Yardbirds wished to follow. Napier-Bell produced only one further single, 'Happenings Ten Years

Time Ago', but its startling experiments in sound developed his reputation as a producer of strange records.

Napier-Bell was in the forefront, developing the new sounds coming from the London that was moving away from its Mod image towards what would become the 'underground'. His production on the third Marc Bolan single, 'Hippy Gumbo', was totally fascinating, extending the voice from the slightly unusual into an absorbing, unique style. It was Napier-Bell, too, who discovered John's Children, whose first two singles, 'The Love I Thought I'd Found' (titled 'Smashed! Blocked!' in the US) and 'Just What You Want' anticipated the kind of experiments which would become commonplace in British studios a year later. Other new producers of the era included Mike Collier, who was responsible for some of London's more interesting R&B releases – he worked with both Chris Farlowe and the Downliners Sect – Larry Page.

Page's approach lay somewhere between the Mod inspiration of Shel Talmy and the commercial flair of Mickie Most. He worked with the Riot Squad, giving them a full, rounded R&B sound on the first two singles 'Anytime' and 'Nevertheless', and with the Clique, whose style was nearer to Mod pop-art but in a simpler, cleaner form. Page's greatest success, however, came with the Troggs, for whom he trimmed down riffs to their bare bones, creating excellent examples of pure simplistic pop in 'Wild Thing', 'Give It To Me' and others.

Perhaps the ultimate independence granted to producers came from within Andrew Oldham's Immediate label. Artists signed to Immediate were given artistic freedom as well as unlimited studio time, thus permitting experimentation. Many musicians themselves were given the opportunity to attempt production – Mick Jagger and Eric Burdon, for example, both worked with Chris Farlowe, while Steve Marriott and Ronnie Lane of the Small Faces produced their own group releases on the label. Gradually, the employee role of producers was being broken and by the end of the decade they would be afforded a status as artists in their own right, on a par with the musicians they were involved with. Furthermore, many groups and artists, having become more confident in the studio, would prefer to deal with the production of their music themselves.

These changes were to bring to an end the full-scale use of session musicians, many of whom had joined or formed groups of their own by the Seventies. Jimmy Page had ceased to perform sessions on joining the Yardbirds in 1966 and he was later to form Led Zeppelin, whose members also included fellow session man John Paul Jones. Jon Lord, meanwhile, had formed Deep Purple in 1968 and Nicky Hopkins moved to America in 1969, joining San Francisco band Quicksilver Messenger Service in time to appear on their third album, *Shady Grove*. With growing freedoms appearing within the rock industry, the mid-Sixties' unique mixture of session work and production innovation had come to an end.

BRIAN HOGG

Above: Simon Napier-Bell (standing), produced Marc Bolan's early hits. Here, in 1981, he adds backings to some unreleased Bolan tapes. Below: The Troggs with their huge hit single 'I Can't Control Myself', produced by Larry Page.

THE GREAT MUSICIANS

Keith Richards

Keith Richards' style has never depended on the use of any one guitar; he will switch, with apparent unconcern, from a Gibson (above, with Ron Wood) to a Fender Telecaster (overleaf).

Pete Townshend has described the guitar-playing of Keith Richards as 'like a locomotive rolling along with one wheel missing'. This remark from Townshend, himself a respected and influential rhythm guitarist, was intended not as underhand criticism, but as a compliment; Townshend was highlighting Richards' loose but incredibly powerful sense of rhythm and dynamics.

Over the years, countless guitarists have been influenced and inspired by Keith Richards. Just as many have doubtless, at some stage, tried to actually sound like him, but few have succeeded. The reason is probably that these players are too accomplished or trying too hard. There are numerous rock records in the racks featuring imitations of Richards' distinctive riff, carefully picked out on the second, third and fourth strings of the guitar with the other strings damped and the amplifier cranked up to a nice 'tasteful' level of distortion. Richards' approach is the total opposite, however. He open-tunes the guitar, grabs the neck with one hand, and makes random swipes in the general direction of the strings with the other, paying little attention to what sort of sound his amplifier is making. It is this slapdash approach that is undoubtedly the key to Richards' appeal, and which gives the Rolling Stones their uniquely 'mean' sound.

In the early days of the Stones, Richards came over as a heavily Chuck Berry-influenced lead guitarist; their covers of classic Berry numbers such as 'Carol' and 'Bye Bye Johnny' show Richards churning out fills and solos which are pure Chuck Berry but with less of a 'twang' than the man himself would have given them. Richards' notes came out slurred and distorted, a perfect compliment to his off-hand stage manner. This early looseness was particularly apparent in the Stones' version of 'It's All Over Now'. Brian Jones' delicate fingerpicking is complemented by a three-note riff from Richards at the end of each line. Despite the simplicity of this, Richards still manages to make numerous mistakes: damping the strings, producing unintentional harmonics, and turning in a solo which consists mainly of the same blues lick played over and over again. It was another three-note riff which produced what many still consider to be Richards' finest hour: 'Satisfaction', released in 1965, was a classic anthem of teenage alienation with Richards' menacing riff perfectly echoing the frustration of Jagger's lyrics.

After their initial onslaught of hard-edged R&B, the Stones started to become more experimental and introspective. Although prominent as composer of their material, Richards as guitarist faded into the background, often picking out a gentle melody on an acoustic guitar but usually being overshadowed by Brian Jones' multi-instrumental talents. Richards has never kept secret his admiration of Jones, who was forever buying new instruments and experimenting with new and unorthodox techniques. One of the earliest of these techniques was Jones' penchant for open-tuning, where the guitar is tuned to a simple chord, which made necessary the use of new fingering patterns. This method dates back to the early delta-blues players, who Jones tried to emulate in his pre-Stones days, and was used to great effect by Jones on several early Stones numbers – on the opening riff of 'Nineteenth Nervous Breakdown' and on the slide-guitar of 'I Wanna Be Your Man', for example. As Jones started to play less and less guitar, Richards started to use open tunings himself.

When Jones left the group in 1969 (being replaced by former John Mayall lead guitarist Mick Taylor), Richards moved over to the position of rhythm guitarist, incorporating the 'Keef-riff' into most of the Stones' uptempo material.

To sound like Keith Richards, one must first tune the guitar to a major chord – usually G, although he has also been known to use E or A – and then place the first finger in a barré across the strings. The 'Keef-riff' is played by alternating between this position and an 'A minor 7th' shape. Of course, there are many variations on this; the Stones' music still sounds fresh and original. Richards is constantly investigating new rhythms and, with Taylor replaced in the Stones' line-up by Ronnie Wood, himself a player very much in the Richards mould, the Stones' records are featuring an increasingly dense foray of open-tuned rhythm guitar.

One thing Keith Richards is not known for is having one particular guitar as a trademark. He has a general preference for classic American instruments, particularly Fender Telecasters – but as far as equipment is concerned, there is no distinctive 'Keith Richards sound'. He has appeared on record plummy and distorted, and thin and tinny. With the exception of a little wah-wah on the likes of 'Heartbreaker' and 'Fingerprint File', he is not a great user of effect pedals.

The secret of Keith Richards' style is in the pendular flailing of his right arm. This loose-limbed approach is an integral part of the Richards persona: the toothless scowl, the stooping shoulders, the thin reedy voice, the expensive drug problem (allegedly now cured). But though loose, Richards' playing is never lacking in energy; his churning riffs combine with Charlie Watts' drums to form a steamroller of relentless rhythm – listen to 'Tumbling Dice' for an example of looseness with power! Mick Jagger has described Keith Richards as someone who 'desperately *needs* to play'. Hopefully, he always will need to.

JOHN VOYSEY

THE HISTORY OF Rock